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In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service from both a first maintenance station and a second maintenance station;

providing a first communication means associated with a first maintenance station for communicating whether the first maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

providing a second communication means associated with the second maintenance station for communicating whether the second maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

wherein said railcar is held in a first queue area if the first communication means indicates that the first maintenance station is unavailable to receive the railcar even if the second maintenance station is available to receive the railcar and further wherein the railcar is transferred into the maintenance facility if the first communication means indicates that the first railcar maintenance station is available to receive the railcar even if the second communication means indicates that the second maintenance station is unavailable to receive the railcar wherein transferring the railcar comprises the steps of:

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

transferring the railcar to ~~at least one of the first maintenance stations~~
station via the transfer area;

working on the railcar within the ~~at least one first~~ maintenance station;

transferring the railcar to the second maintenance station for servicing at
the second maintenance station; and

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility; ~~and~~

~~holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance~~
~~station is not available.~~

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

inspecting the railcar for maintenance needs prior to moving the railcar to
the transfer area.

3. (Previously cancelled).

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

providing a plurality of repair stations within the maintenance facility; and
transferring the railcar to one of the repair stations.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

providing an inbound railway and an outbound railway;
moving the railcars into and out of the maintenance facility via the inbound
and outbound railways, respectively.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

removing a paint coating from an interior of the railcar within one of the
maintenance stations.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

removing a paint coating from an exterior of the railcar within one of the maintenance stations.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
administering a lining to an interior of the railcar within a first maintenance station; and

curing the lining within a second maintenance station.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
administering a coating of paint to an exterior of the railcar within a first maintenance station; and

curing the coating of paint within a second maintenance station.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
disassembling the railcar to repair the railcar within a first maintenance station; and

reassembling the railcar after the railcar is repaired within a second maintenance station.

11. (Original) The method of claim 6 farther comprising the step of:
removing the paint coating by blasting the interior of the railcar with a scouring material.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the material is selected from the group consisting of metal grit, metal pellets, sand and water.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
cleaning the railcar within one of the maintenance stations.

14. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

providing a transfer table for transferring the railcar through the maintenance facility; and

transferring the railcar between maintenance stations.

15. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

providing an inbound railway;

providing an inspection area connected to the inbound railway;

inspecting the railcar to determine maintenance needs of the railcar; and

routing the railcar through the maintenance facility based on the maintenance needs.

16. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of transfer tables within the transfer area; and

transferring a plurality of railcars through the facility via the plurality of transfer tables.

17. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

providing an interior blast station for scouring an interior of the railcar;

providing a lining queue area connected to the transfer area; and

transferring the railcar to the lining queue area if the interior blast station is unavailable to receive the railcar.

18. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

providing a paint station connected to the transfer area;

providing a cure queue area connected to the transfer area; and

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

transferring the railcar to the cure queue area if the paint station is unavailable to receive the railcar.

19. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

providing a communication means at each maintenance station for communicating whether the maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

communicating to an operator via the communication means, the availability of the maintenance stations; and

transferring the railcar to a maintenance station that is available based on the communication of the maintenance stations to the operator.

20. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

inspecting the railcar for maintenance needs; and

administering a designation to the railcar based on the maintenance needs of the railcar.

21. (Currently amended) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the maintenance stations;

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

administering a lining to an interior of the railcar within a first maintenance station;

curing the lining with a second maintenance station; and

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility;

~~administering a lining to an interior of the railcar within a first maintenance stations; and~~

~~curing the lining with a second maintenance station.~~

22. (Previously amended) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the maintenance stations;

providing an interior blast station for scouring an interior of the railcar;

providing a lining queue area connected to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to the lining queue area if the interior blast station is unavailable to receive the railcar; and

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility;

~~providing an interior blast station for scouring an interior of the railcar;~~

~~providing a lining queue area connected to the transfer area; and~~

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

~~transferring the railcar to the lining queue area if the interior blast station is
unavailable to receive the railcar.~~

23. (Cancelled).

24. (Cancelled).

25. (Currently amended) A method for repairing railcars, the method
comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility
comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance
station is not available:

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance station;

administering a lining to an interior of the railcar within a first maintenance
station;

curing the lining within a second maintenance station; and

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility; and

~~holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance
station is not available.~~

26. (Currently amended) A method for repairing railcars, the method
comprising the steps of:

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance station is not available;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance station;

providing an interior blast station for scouring an interior of the railcar;

providing a lining queue area connected to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to the lining queue area if the interior blast station is unavailable to receive the railcar; and

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility; ~~and~~

~~holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance station is not available.~~

27. (Cancelled).

28. (Cancelled).

29. (Re-presented -- formerly dependent claim 8) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

providing a communication means associated with a maintenance station for communicating whether the maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance station is not available;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance station;

administering a lining to an interior of the railcar within a first maintenance station;

curing the lining within a second maintenance station; and

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility.

30. (Re-presented -- formerly dependent claim 17) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

providing a communication means associated with a maintenance station for communicating whether the maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance station is not available;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance station;

In re Barich, et al.
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/725,656

providing an interior blast station for scouring an interior of the railcar;
providing a lining queue area connected to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to the lining queue area if the interior blast station is
unavailable to receive the railcar; and
moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility.

31. (Re-presented -- formerly dependent claim 18) A method for repairing
railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility
comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;
providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;
providing a communication means associated with a maintenance station for
communicating whether the maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;
holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance
station is not available;
moving the railcar to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;
working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance station;
providing a paint station connected to the transfer area;
providing a cure queue area connected to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to the cure queue area if the paint station is
unavailable to receive the railcar; and
moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility.